

## ROWING

## Rower Takes On An International Challenge In Grueling English Race

BY JANE LANE

In the past few years, according to local boat builder Jon Daley, there has been a resurgence in the ancient craft of constructing wooden boats by hand. Not incidentally, there has been a renewed interest by rowers to own and race these vessels whose heritage recalls a time when bustling shipyards dotted the entire east coast.

Daley, who built his own home in Plympton and works as a boat builder at Snug Harbor Boatworks, fits into both categories. An avid yachtsman since his youth, Daley has evolved into an accomplished rower. In the past 5 or 6 years he has gone from racing 14-foot dories, to his current passion, competing as a member of the Saquish rowing team.

The team, victorious in all of their 15 races from Maine to Cape Cod, is lead by Mike Jenness of Pembroke and his father, Mike Jenness Sr. Together, father and son built the 32-foot pilot gig, *Saquish*, an effort that spanned more than 2,000 hours of intense labor.

Daley, 44, is in the midst of training as the team prepares for their first international competition in the Isles of Scilly, 28 miles of treacherous waters swirling off the southwest coast of England. Swells and gusting wind are expected elements of this race, a prospect which would quickly deter most landlubbers.

It is not a prospect that frightens this veteran yachtsman.

For years, Daley and his friend, Steve Woll of Pembroke, have been rowing in good seas and bad off the coast of Duxbury and beyond.

"We like to fish in dories -- we go out about 2 miles all the time. We get into some sea now and then, so we're not worried about this," Daley said.

The Saquish Seafarer's Rowing Club, so-named because several members have known each other since their childhood summers at Saquish, has been invited to participate in the World Pilot Gig Championship on May 3 and 4. The invitation was extended, Daley explained, because of the team's undefeated record.

Daley's interest in boats was nurtured by his grandfather, a boatbuilder who left Nova Scotia and settled in Hanson. Daley's father taught him to sail many years ago when they summered at his grandmother's cottage along the Cut River. So when Mike Jenness and the Saquish team beckoned, Woll and Daley did not hesitate. Woll actually accepted a temporary membership, and will be unable to attend the overseas competition.



Jon Daley, a boatbuilder at Snug Harbor Boatworks and a member of the Saquish Seafarer's Rowing Club, prepares to launch the pilot gig, *Kittery*, from the town landing.

Photo by Jon Sweeney

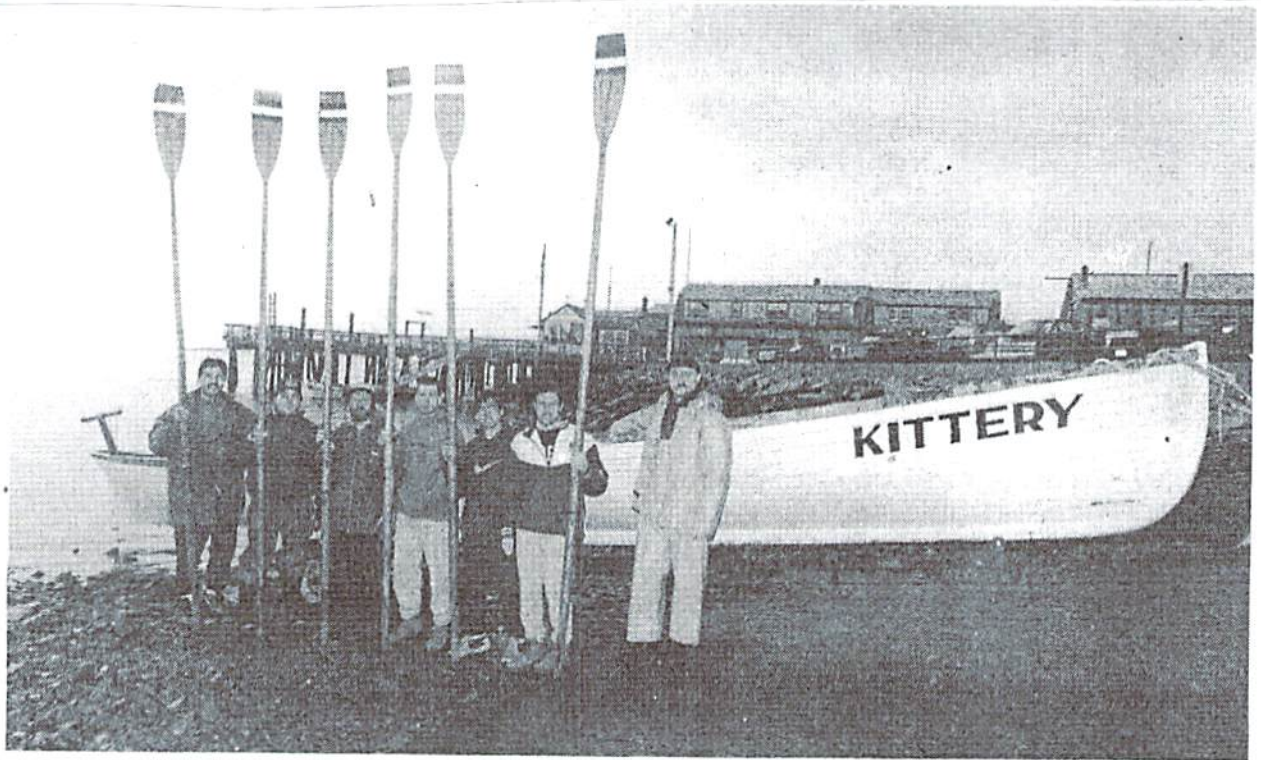
The *Saquish*, which will not be used in the English competition because of hefty transportation costs, is a 32-foot gig. That is the English terminology for the once-plentiful row boats used to haul pilots to waiting ships in need of navigators to steer them through the dangerous English channels.

Gigs are multi-oar boats powered by single-bank sweeps. There is one rower and one oar per seat and oars alternate starboard to port.

"Rowers used to race the boats," Daley explained, "because the first boat to the ship got the job." As the shipping industry dissolved, the gigs became obsolete and the races vanished.

Rowing, said Daley, has been recently rejuvenated in this area, although its renewal began years earlier in Europe. The racing season here begins March 1 and concludes in November. These competitors are indeed hardy outdoorsmen (and women).





The 7-member crew of the Saquish Seafarer's Rowing Club prepares for their 13-mile practice row before they travel to the coast of England for their 1st international competition.

*Photo by Jon Sweeney*

It's a natural fit, this love of the sea and the traditional, wooden vessels which navigate through it, Daley explained. When he's not training with his 6 team members, Daley can be found at Snug Harbor Boatworks as he labors over a re-creation of the Duxbury Duck. The Duck is part of local seafaring lore, an 18-foot day sailer that was popular with Duxbury boaters in the 1920s. The Snug Harbor boatyard has built 2 Ducks thus far, one of which has already been sold.

Throughout the winter they have also completed building renovations for the Duxbury Historical Society hoping that one day Snug Harbor Boatworks will be commissioned to construct a schooner. The full rig ships dominated Duxbury Bay in the early 1800s when this was one of the premier shipbuilding ports in the United States. As larger, faster ships were needed to sail west, Duxbury's shallow channel forced the local industry into decline.

Daley uses any and all spare time to train for the upcoming event. It is a 7-day-a-week schedule which includes a strenuous regime of weight training alternating with hours on the rowing machine. Weekends are spent on a practice gig, the *Kittery*, as team members row at least 13 miles on Saturday and Sunday.

Until then, however, Daley is looking forward to the physical challenge and the welcomed camaraderie of his first European competition. "We probably won't win it all," he said. "The rowers there compete full-time, every Wednesday and Friday night. But we'll place well, I hope."

The Scilly race will be financially challenging, as well, and contributions are welcomed to defray the \$8,000 expense. Contributions may be sent to the Saquish Seafarer's Rowing Club, c/o Jon Daley, P.O. Box 117 SHS, 31 Mattakesett Court, Duxbury, MA 02331.